

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MEXICO CITY

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SUBJ: BILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL DISCUSSIONS WITH MEXICO

REF: MEXICO 8615

1. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE TOPICS THE U.S. PROPOSES FOR DISCUSSION AT THE DECEMBER 6-7 MEETINGS WITH MEXICANS WHICH EMBASSY SHOULD DISCUSS WITH APPROPRIATE GOM OFFICIALS. GOM REACTIONS TO THIS LIST AND THEIR LIST OF DESIRED TOPICS SHOULD BE CABLED TO DEPARTMENT.

2. AIR POLLUTION PROBLEMS

DOUGLAS-AQUA PRIETA AREA

TWO COPPER SMELTERS ARE LOCATED IN THIS AREA, ONE IN THE U.S. AT DOUGLAS, ARIZONA, THE OTHER IN MEXICO AT CANANEA, SONORA. THE U.S. SMELTER CREATES AIR QUALITY PROBLEMS. THE CANANEA SMELTER MAY BE CAUSING CROP DAMAGE AT NACO, ARIZONA.
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EPA AND THE STATE OF ARIZONA ARE DEVELOPING POLLUTION ABATEMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DOUGLAS SMELTER. THE SMELTER IS PRESENTLY ON A COMPLIANCE SCHEDULE FOR CONTROL OF SULFUR DIOXIDE EMISSIONS TO MEET PRIMARY

STANDARDS.

A METHOD HAS BEEN PROPOSED WHEREBY ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION LEVELS WOULD BE MONITORED, AND EMISSIONS WOULD BE CONTROLLED BY TEMPORARILY REDUCING OR CURTAILING OPERATIONS TO MEET THE SHORT-TERM SECONDARY STANDARDS. A MONITORING EFFORT HAS BEEN RECENTLY INITIATED AT THIS SITE. MONITORING WAS TO BE EXTENDED INTO AQUA PRIETA THROUGH COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS OF USPHS AND MEXICAN HEALTH OFFICIALS. RECENT CHANGES IN THE USPHS PROGRAM HAVE CURTAILED THIS COOPERATIVE EFFORT.

MONITORING IS NEEDED ON THE MEXICAN SIDE TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER U.S. ACTIONS ARE SUFFICIENT TO RESULT IN ACCEPTABLE AIR QUALITY LEVELS IN MEXICO. THIS COULD BE A FIRST STEP. HOWEVER, A COOPERATIVE PROGRAM IS NEEDED TO BRING MEXICAN AND AMERICAN OFFICIALS AND MANAGERS OF THE TWO SMELTERS TOGETHER. THE GOALS WOULD BE TO ASSURE THAT: (1) ACCEPTABLE CONTROLS WERE INCORPORATED IN SMELTERS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER; (2) THAT DATA NECESSARY TO MONITOR THESE PROGRAMS WERE DEVELOPED AND FREELY EXCHANGED; AND (3) THAT THE ABATEMENT EFFORTS OF INDUSTRIES IN EACH COUNTRY WERE MADE KNOWN TO PEOPLE LIVING IN THE BORDER AREAS. IF SUCCESSFUL, THIS EFFORT WOULD SERVE AS USEFUL GOVERNMENT/INDUSTRY COOPERATION ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER.

SAN DIEGO-CALEXIO AREA

DATA AND PROJECTIONS INDICATE THAT U.S. CO AND OX STANDARDS IN THE U.S. WILL NOT BE MET WITHOUT TRANSPORTATION CONTROLS. A TRANSPORTATION CONTROL PLAN IS BEING DEVELOPED FOR THE U.S. SIDE.

THERE IS LITTLE DATA AVAILABLE IN THE U.S. TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS PROBLEM EXTENDS INTO MEXICO;
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HOWEVER, BOTH VEHICLES AND ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTANTS MOVE BACK AND FORTH ACROSS THE BORDER.

THUS, THERE IS A NEED TO ADDRESS TWO TYPES OF PROBLEMS: (1) TO REDUCE EMISSIONS IN ONE COUNTRY TO LOWER AMBIENT ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION LEVELS IN THE OTHER, AND (2) TO IDENTIFY AND CONTROL LOCALIZED POLLUTION LEVELS AT MAJOR BORDER CROSSINGS.

THE FIRST STEP WOULD BE TO ESTABLISH A WORKING ARRANGEMENT TO LINK BOTH SIDES. THE WORKING ARRANGEMENT SHOULD PROVIDE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION, DETERMINATION OF THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF EXISTING PROBLEMS, AND CONSIDERATION OF ABATEMENT PROGRAMS.

EL PASO-JUAREZ AREA

EL PASO COUNTY ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT 95 OF THE POPULATION OF THE TEXAS PORTION OF THE EL PASO-LAS CRUCES-ALAMOGORDO AIR QUALITY CONTROL REGION. JUAREZ HAS AN ESTIMATED POPULATION OF 450,000 PEOPLE. THE COMBINED POPULATION OF THE TWO CITIES (EL PASO AND JUAREZ) IS OVER 800,000 PEOPLE.

TRANSPORTATION SOURCES CURRENTLY ACCOUNT FOR MORE THAN 95 OF THE REACTIVE HYDROCARBON PROBLEM (INCLUDES GASOLINE EVAPORATION) IN THE TEXAS REGION, WITH POLLUTANT CONCENTRATIONS FROM THE EMISSION INVENTORY CLOSELY FOLLOWING POPULATION DISTRIBUTION PATTERNS. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT JUAREZ ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT AN EQUAL LEVEL OF REACTIVE HYDROCARBON EMISSIONS AS DOES EL PASO, TEXAS. ALSO, MUCH OF THE BORDER TRAFFIC IS ASSOCIATED WITH JOB COMMUTERS AND/OR BORDER SHOPPING.

EPA HAS PROMULGATED TRANSPORTATION CONTROL PLANS FOR THE EL PASO AIR QUALITY CONTROL REGION PURSUANT TO A COURT ORDER. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO AN EPA CONTRACT REPORT, THESE TWO CITIES MUST BE CONSIDERED AS A SINGLE METROPOLITAN AREA FOR PURPOSES OF AIR POLLUTION CONTROL. THUS, JUAREZ HYDROCARBON EMISSION SOURCES MUST BE UNCLASSIFIED

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CONTROLLED BY A SIMILAR PERCENTAGE TO ENSURE ATTAINMENT OF THE AIR QUALITY STANDARDS IN THE AREA. THIS PROBLEM WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE MAYORS OF EL PASO AND JUAREZ DURING OUR PUBLIC HEARING IN EL PASO ON JULY 18, 1973.

MEXICO COULD TAKE POSITIVE ACTION BY DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING A TRANSPORTATION CONTROL PLAN FOR JUAREZ, MEXICO. THIS WOULD INCLUDE DEVELOPING A HYDROCARBON EMISSION INVENTORY, AND A CONTINUOUS OXIDANT MONITORING STATION.

TO BETTER DEFINE SO₂ POLLUTION POCKETS AND SOURCES THEREOF, A MORE EXTENSIVE SAMPLING PROGRAM AND EMISSION INVENTORY ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER MUST BE CONDUCTED. IT IS UNREASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT A CONTROL STRATEGY

DESIGNED FOR EL PASO ALONE WILL BE EFFECTIVE IN THE ATTAINMENT OF AIR QUALITY STANDARDS. STEPS ALONG THESE LINES SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH THE MEXICANS AND A PLAN OF ACTION SHOULD BE DEVELOPED.

A NEW CEMENT MANUFACTURING PLANT IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF JUAREZ, USING THE DRY MANUFACTURING PROCESS, IS EMITTING EXCESSIVE PARTICULATES WHICH, WHEN THE WIND IS FROM THE

SOUTH OR SOUTHWEST, CAUSES AIR POLLUTION IN EL PASO. ADDITION AND OPERATION OF AN ELECTROSTATIC PRECIPITATOR IS PLANNED, BUT THE DATE OF ITS INITIAL OPERATION IS NOT KNOWN.

BROWNSVILLE-MATAMOROS, LAREDO-NUEVO LAREDO, AND EAGLE PASS-PIEDRAS NEGRAS AREAS

THE BROWNSVILLE-LAREDO AND EAGLE PASS AIR QUALITY CONTROL REGION'S ARE CLASSIFIED PRIORITY I FOR PARTICULATES ONLY. THE INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM SEEMS TO BE: (1) LIMITED TO LOCALIZED HIGH CO CONCENTRATIONS AT THE INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES DUE TO STOP-AND-GO TRAFFIC AND INSPECTIONS, AND (2) PARTICULATE CONCENTRATIONS DUE PRIMARILY TO OPEN BURNING IN MEXICO AND UNPAVED ROADS ON BOTH SIDES OF UNCLASSIFIED

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THE BORDER. A NOTABLE EXCEPTION COULD BE INDUSTRIALIZED CITIES OF NUEVO LAREDO, AND (TO A PERHAPS LESSER EXTENT), PIEDRAS NEGRAS. THESE MEXICAN CITIES HAVE SIGNIFICANT INDUSTRIAL EMISSIONS, WHICH FOR PURPOSES OF CONTROL STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT FOR THE AREA, MUST BE CONSIDERED.

STREET PAVING PROGRAMS, PHASING OUT OF OLDER MODEL AUTOMOBILES, STATIONARY SOURCE EMISSION CONTROLS, CONTROLS ON OPEN BURNING, INCREASED EFFICIENCY IN MOVING TRAFFIC ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE WOULD OF COURSE HELP TO REDUCE AIR POLLUTANTS IN THESE BORDER AREA COMMUNITIES. EPA HAS ADVISED GSA, FNWA, U.S. COAST GUARD, AND THE CITY OF LAREDO ON THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED U.S. BORDER STATION AND BRIDGE AT LAREDO-NUEVO LAREDO. THROUGH OUR RECOMMENDATIONS, AN EXTENSIVE MONITORING PROGRAM WILL BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE CITY OF LAREDO AT THE SITE TO MONITOR CARBON MONOXIDE AND OTHER EXISTING AIR POLLUTANTS.

THESE PROBLEMS SHOULD BE REVIEWED WITH A VIEW TO DETERMINING THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PROBLEMS AS SEEN ON BOTH SIDES AND SEEING WHAT STEPS ARE UNDERWAY OR CONTEMPLATED FOR DEALING WITH THEM.

3. WATER POLLUTION PROBLEMS

RIO GRANDE

GENERALLY, NO SERIOUS WATER POLLUTION PROBLEMS EXIST ON THE TEXAS SIDE OF THE RIO GRANDE RIVER. IN ADDITION EPA GENERALLY CONCURS WITH THE TEXAS WATER QUALITY BOARD'S STANDARDS PROPOSED FOR THE RIO GRANDE RIVER. HOWEVER, BECAUSE MOST MEXICAN COMMUNITIES LOCATED ALONG THE RIO GRANDE HAVE, AT THE BEST, ONLY PRIMARY SEWAGE

TREATMENT CAPABILITIES, INTERNATIONAL WATER POLLUTION PROBLEMS ARE EXISTANT. ALSO, WE UNDERSTAND THAT IRRIGATION RUNOFF FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER HAS ADDED FERTILIZER RESIDUES TO THE RIO GRANDE RIVER. TO HELP
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IN ALLEVIATING SOME OF THESE PROBLEMS, THE TEXAS WATER QUALITY BOARD DESIRES TO UNDERTAKE A 303(A) WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT BASIN STUDY IN THE RIO GRANDE BASIN. SCHEDULED COMPLETION OF THE STUDY IS SET FOR JUNE 1975. THE TEXAS WATER QUALITY BOARD IS PREPARED TO INVESTIGATE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT NEEDS ON THE TEXAS SIDE, HOWEVER, INPUT FROM THE MEXICAN SIDE IS NECESSARY IF THE STUDY IS TO RESULT IN A USABLE DOCUMENT FOR UPGRADING WATER QUALITY IN THE RIO GRANDE BASIN.

THIS ISSUE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TO PROVIDE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE POLLUTION PROBLEMS IN THE RIO GRANDE AND TO SEE WHAT STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN OR ARE PLANNED TO DEAL WITH THEM. THE IBWC WOULD APPEAR TO BE THE APPROPRIATE CHANNEL FOR DISCUSSION OF THIS ISSUE.

NEW RIVER

SINCE 1950 THE DISCHARGE OF MEXICALI RAW SEWAGE INTO THE NEW RIVER AND THENCE INTO THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN A MAJOR SANITATION PROBLEM. WITH THE RECENT CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEXICALI MUNICIPAL SANITATION SYSTEM, APPROXIMATELY EIGHTY PER CENT OF MEXICALI'S SEWAGE REACHES MEXICO'S NEW TREATMENT PLANT, BUT AT THE END OF 1973 SOME TWENTY PER CENT OF THE TOTAL SEWAGE STILL ENTERS THE UNITED STATES IN THE NEW RIVER, AND PASSES CLOSE TO THE BUSINESS SECTION OF CALEXICO, CALIFORNIA.

4. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

AREA: ALL ALONG THE BORDER

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF RECURRING PROBLEMS WHICH MERIT ATTENTION. THE TASK SEEMS TO BE TO DEVELOP INFORMATION AND EVALUATE IT, IDENTIFY PROBLEMS, AND FORMULATE

SOLUTIONS. SEVERAL EXAMPLES ARE:

1. POLLUTION FROM DOMESTIC WASTEWATER DISCHARGES IN THE COLORADO, ALAMO, AND RIO GRANDE RIVERS, AND IN THE OCEAN WATERS OFF THE COAST. DOCUMENTATION IS NEEDED ON
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OCCURRENCE OF POLLUTANTS, PROBABLE SOURCES, SCHEDULE OF

PROPOSED ABATEMENT ACTIONS, ETC.

2. SOME OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS ALONG THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER ARE THE POTENTIAL SOURCES FOR SPILLS OF OIL AND OTHER HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES. ALONG THE RIO GRANDE THESE INCLUDE OIL FIELDS, PIPELINES, REFINERIES, MERCURY MINES AND MERCURY PROCESSING FACILITIES. IN THE GULF OF MEXICO THE AREA OFFSHORE FROM THE MOUTH OF THE RIO GRANDE AS WELL AS THE PACIFIC COAST IS A POTENTIAL AREA FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF OIL AND GAS RESERVES. KISSINGER

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